

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Ramon Bueno – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Aladdine Joroff – Nominated Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Director of Office of Sustainability & Environment

Enid Kumin

Lindsay Lucke

Dana Clawson

Grace Hall

Annagret Klaua

Mary Mangan

Introductions

- Question about whether members of the public can have their cameras on during meeting; may be a technical limitation, but Oliver will check.

Review and adopt the minutes from the April 14, 2021 meeting

- Approved (motion by Eliza; seconded by Ramon; approved 5-0)

Review topics from Next Generation Roadmap

- Key Questions:
 - How can Somerville influence the resulting policies.
 - How does this impact the Somerville Climate Forward planning/actions in the short and long-term.

BUILDINGS: discussion tabled until June meeting

ENERGY SECTOR (lead, Aladdine)

- Different pathways to transforming energy system to Net Zero all include four pillars:
 1. Energy efficiency
 2. Electrifying end-uses: including making new facilities “ready” for electrification to avoid later retrofit costs
 - a. Must balance with impacts of uncontrolled exit from the gas system and escalating rates for remaining customers
 3. Decarbonizing electricity
 - a. Distributed Energy – including rooftop solar [rooftop needs more capital cost than land-based solar, but siting is easier]

- b. Discussion of alternative fuels still open (e.g., geothermal, hydrogen, biogas, renewable natural gas, etc.)
- 4. Carbon capture technology
- Need to think across sectors: e.g., how will electrified transportation support/interact with building electricity needs, peak demand, etc.
- Legislation includes some requirements for use of a metric like the social cost of carbon
- Issues for Somerville
 - Energy Efficiency: ongoing efforts complement state goals; consider how to expand
 - Should there be an advocacy role concerning decarbonizing building sector (given lead with net zero zoning)
 - Does City have opinion/position on any alternative fuels (e.g., safety or other)
 - Should City use some metric for “pricing” carbon (discuss SCC further)
 - How interact with Dept. of Public Utilities (in 20-80 and other planning processes)

MOBILITY (lead, Eliza)

- 2 main topics related to (i) Electric Vehicle (EV) benchmarks and (ii) associated incentives
- EV alone won’t get us to the goal of cleaner transportation
- Also need to focus on driving less
- Issues for Somerville
 - TCI, i.e., a carbon pricing approach (how can funds be used; if Somerville receives any, how should it be used)
 - Zoning for EVs, municipal curbside charging (i.e., houses without a driveway)
 - Stay focused on equitable approach to EV access – purchase & charging; advantageous parking permits, car-sharing, etc.; location of charging stations
 - Oliver: mapping about where EV charging would be good indicates almost anywhere in the City. To-date, companies that produce charging stations still are figuring out how to make money from the charging business. Somerville is not currently the type of location targeted for siting DC fast charging stations.
 - Consider energy source for charging stations (e.g., is electricity renewable)
 - Improve transportation, e.g., reducing car trips, avoiding MBTA service cuts, and increasing bike programs and shared streets
 - Can City coordinate with the MBTA to make some critical routes better
 - Should Somerville try to run free bus pilots on key routes
 - Is goal to reduce car trips or increase public transportation options/ease of routes (or both)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ)/JOB TRAINING (lead, Julie)

- Codified state EJ policy, including updating definition for EJ community
 - Reduced overall number of census blocks that are EJ communities, so state can put more emphasis on the most over-burdened communities
- Requires new development in an EJ community to consider cumulative impacts
- Includes more specific rules about community engagement and outreach

- New EJ Advisory Council made up of residents of EJ communities
- Job training – routes additional funding to Mass CEC to focus on clean energy work force development; more training opportunities for minority groups, EJ community members and fossil fuel workers
- Issues for Somerville
 - Oliver: EJ is focused on limiting impact rather than improving existing conditions; Somerville wants to do more
 - Many identify climate vulnerable populations separate from EJ communities
 - Should the City play a role in educating communities about new EJ rights
 - City should track changes in EJ maps; see if City's EJ communities change

POWER SECTOR (lead, Ramon)

- GHG emission reduction targets are faster, with more interim requirements
- MassSave should use GHG emission reductions as a metric in measuring program success
- Revise incentives for SMART program
- Issues for Somerville
 - How does community choice electricity program relate to changing state targets
 - Do City's actions/programs take full advantage of new incentive programs

GOALS (lead, Larry)

- There are now federal and state targets for emission reductions
- State bill: 50% reduction from 1990 by 2030; 75% by 2040 – implies a 1/3 reduction from 2020 to 2030
 - Includes six subsector targets
- Issues for Somerville
 - Somerville has a carbon neutral goal for 2050 – should the City adopt interim goals as well? What about sectoral goals? (latter may be harder)
 - How balance with focus on actions rather than metrics

OVERALL

- Consider revisiting state “advocacy” goals. For example, regarding net zero buildings, is role of City as (i) a stakeholder in stretch energy code development; (ii) to provide proof of “success” of net zero buildings; and/or (iii) to ask for greater authority still (or flexibility, or funds to implement, etc.)

Next Steps

- Develop list of issues to track v. actions we can take now, including:
 - What can the City advocate for now
 - Understand the state and federal legislative context